



I AM NAVY MEDICINE: HOSPITAL CORPSMAN 3RD CLASS HAROLD DEXTER

Not every Sailor's journey from being a civilian to the world of Navy Medicine is a designed, straightforward destination.

There are some Sailors who join the Navy with a different path in mind but eventually find their calling to help support mission readiness and an operationally ready force.

"My military career began pretty rough," said Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Harold Dexter, from Tampa, Fla., assigned to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton. "I was originally contracted as a cryptologic technician interpreter (CTI) so I went to Monterey, Calif., to attend the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC)."

Dexter's went to study Spanish – a 36 week long course – in DLIFLC European and Latin American School, but his Navy career took an unexpected turn following completion of his schooling.

"After completing the school I did not pass the final exam and was sent as an undesignated seaman to a destroyer," he said.

Dexter was then sent to the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Farragut (DDG 99) as an undesignated seaman. An undesignated seaman is a Sailor without a set job who will get the opportunity to work around the ship before choosing one.

Even though Dexter's original plan didn't pan out how he wished, when he decided to stay Navy he worked hard and eventually became a hospital corpsman.

"After failing CTI 'A' school and going to a ship as an undesignated seaman I did not know if I would continue my naval career or get out," said Dexter. "When the opportunity came to strike a rate I saw the corpsman rate and decided to go for it and see what happens."

From CTI to undesignated seaman to becoming a hospital corpsman, Dexter's hard work brought him to NMRTC Bremerton where Capt. Shannon Johnson, commanding officer of NMRTC Bremerton, announced him as the Junior Sailor of the Quarter for the first quarter of 2020.

"My immediate reaction was excitement and relief," said Dexter. "It means that all the work put in not only by myself but my leadership and coworkers paid off. This is a team accomplish, not just individual."

There's an old saying that calm seas do not a Sailor make, and Dexter says he is grateful where Navy Medicine has taken him.

"Navy medicine has helped me reach goals I had previously not thought possible," he said. "It has allowed me to figure out both my short and long term goals. Now knowing that eventually I would like to become an officer, a nurse specifically, with Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists being my long term goal I feel Navy Medicine has given me that clear goal."

Dexter is currently assigned as the Multi-Service Unit (MSU) assistant leading petty officer at NMRTC Bremerton. He also is an assistant command fitness leader.

When asked how he supports the Navy surgeon general's priority of operational readiness he replied, "MSU corpsmen stay ready at all times by ensuring they are medically ready."